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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7918
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2390
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1790
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5821
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5574
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2193
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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RHMFIUU/39OSS INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007

In Today's Papers

Nationalist Party Head Detained in Dink Murder Case
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report police detained on Sunday the extreme nationalist Great Unity Party's (BBP) Trabzon provincial head Yasar Cihan in connection with the assassination of prominent Turkish -Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Yasin Hayal, a leading suspect detained earlier for inciting the murder, was allegedly tied to BBP. BBP chairman Muhsin Yazicioglu rejected charges that his party was involved in the Dink killing. Radikal reports lawyers are concerned about the course of the investigation into the murder, claiming a report about alleged police negligence has not been sent to prosecutors.

Meanwhile, Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan complained to the press that the perpetrators of the murder had not yet been found. "It means that," said Mutafyan, "those behind the murder have been given "very good protection."

Football Diplomacy

Hurriyet reports that Turkey's Fenerbahce football team will go to Damascus on April 3 to attend the opening ceremony of Aleppo stadium. The initial offer came from PM Erdogan and Syrian President Assad agreed to the plan. On April 3, PM Erdogan will go to Damascus, meet with President Assad and later the two leaders will attend the ceremony together in Aleppo. Reporting in Hurriyet, Fatih Cekirge says that 'this is a very important initiative because, in the past, the dictatorships of the Middle East would never allow such programs. Therefore, this is not only the opening of a stadium but more like the end of the history of the dictators and the opening of the Middle East to the world.'

Editorial Commentary on Iraq:

Washington-based Ali Aslan wrote in the Islamist-intellectual daily Zaman: "President Bush expressed that an immediate pull out plan for the US troops, even though it may seem attractive in the short

term, will not serve the American security interests in the long run. A majority of Democrats do not support this view and they are working on draft legislation to set a date for a pull out, but this will most likely be vetoed by President Bush in the end. It is true that a majority of Americans are tired of Iraq policy and support the troops coming home as soon as possible. President Bush could not pursue a realistic Iraq policy, but for the first time he has made a realistic statement regarding the events of Iraq, and I support his approach that an immediate pull out is not a good idea. Politicians should listen to people's sensitivities. However, international politics cannot be sacrificed to populism. Let's not forget that the very same American people once supported the Iraq war. Democrats are asking the Bush administration to announce a calendar for pull-out, which is against the interests of the state. Is there any country in the world that can make its next military step known to the public? Democrats are playing to populism and they should act responsibly. Otherwise, there will be consequences and not only the US, but also the entire world will suffer. International relations should not be a tool for domestic politics. And Iraq should not be used to corner Bush politically."

Zafer Atay wrote in the economic-political daily Dunya: "In less than two months after the Iraq war, President Bush was claiming victory calling it a 'mission accomplished.' After four years of war in Iraq, the situation is even worse than before. In his anniversary speech, President tried to convince us that 'we will win eventually.' Iraq is not only going through a period of war, but a de facto civil war. Sectarian division and divided interests are making Iraq's unity impossible. Shiites feel closer to Iran and work toward a Shiite-led regime. Sunnis are backed by Al Qaeda. Kurds are supported by the US and they have formed an independent administration in the north. Currently, the Kurds are trying to be the predominant controllers of oil resources. Compared to the

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Vietnam example, Iraq presents a far worse example. When Washington decided to pull out from Vietnam, it found negotiating figures such representatives from the Vietkong and North Vietnam. Who will be the Iraqi negotiating partner for the US if and when a pull out is implemented: the Mehdi army of the Shiites or Al Qaeda of the Sunnis? It won't be the government of Iraq. The so-called Baghdad government cannot survive a US pull out. If the US withdraws without establishing internal stability and peace in Iraq, it will be held accountable for the bloodshed afterwards."

YOK Doesn't Recognize the Universities in Northern Iraq
Hurriyet reports that the number of Turkish students from the southeast attending universities in the Northern Iraq Kurdish Administration has been increasing. Higher Education Council (YOK) officials said that currently 750 Turkish students are studying in northern Iraq in Kurdish and Arabic languages. However, officials stressed that YOK does not recognize diplomas from these universities.

TV News:
(NTV, 8 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Two Turkish soldiers killed over the weekend by PKK landmines were buried in Diyarbakir yesterday.
- Justice Minister Cemil Cicek has rejected allegations that the government was blocking the appointment of new judges and prosecutors.
- More than 60 suspects have been arrested in connection with unrest during Nevruz celebrations in Mersin and Van.
- British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett will visit Turkey on March 27-28.

International News

- Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Margarian died on Sunday of heart failure.

- James Holmes, head of the American-Turkish Council, said the US Congress was likely to reject the Armenian genocide bill.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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